



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

The United States and Kyrgyzstan's "Community Connections" Program

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has the honor to announce the continuation of the Community Connections Program in Kyrgyzstan implemented through a subcontract to American Councils for International Education (ACCELS).

The USAID-funded Community Connections Program provides an important opportunity for American people and people from across Central Asia to work together to address common professional challenges while expanding their social and cultural understanding. As business and professional communities of both countries rapidly become integrated, opportunities for positive relations between American people and the people from Central Asia are increasingly important. This program offers home stay-based, three-to-five week practical training opportunities in the United States for business and professional organization leaders from Kyrgyzstan. This program is funded through the USAID and is a part of the U.S. foreign assistance program, financed by the American people.

Leaders of different religious faiths and state agency employees working in the field of religion are invited to participate in the "Religion in Secular Society" program. They will be able to observe religious pluralism in the U.S. in May 2007. Participants will find out how religious organizations interact with the state agencies and learn the mechanisms of religious rights protection. Special attention will be given to religious charitable organizations and the role they play in the life of American society.

Also, the participants will find out more about the protection of religious rights and the freedom of religion as positive social forces of a modern society that influence more than just security questions. Participants will get practical experience in religious pluralism and religious rights from primary sources. Religious leaders will become familiar with and be able to use the methods and mechanisms of religious rights protection in Kyrgyzstan. These strategies can be more effectively used in societies like Kyrgyzstan where different faiths coexist. At the same time, the state religious agency employees participating in this program will get new ideas about the protection of religious rights, a topic that should be one of the most important ones in state policy.

General Requirements:

- Be a citizen of Kyrgyzstan;
- Be a resident of Jalalabat oblast or Uzgen region of Osh oblast;
- Have at least two years of work experience in the field of religion;
- Good knowledge of the Kyrgyz language; and
- Be able to receive American J1 visa.

For participation please complete the application form and submit it not later **than February 28, 2007 till 17:00.** Only selected candidates will be invited for an interview.

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